21. (Amended) The device of claim 9 wherein the heating element is at least partially embedded in the front jaw when the front and rear jaws are in the open position.

22. (Amended) A device for simultaneously heat sealing and severing at least two thermoplastic films, the device comprising:

A3

front and rear opposing jaws moveable between an open position defining a zone for inserting the at least two films between the front and rear jaws and a closed position in which the front and rear jaws are proximate each other, the rear jaw including a resilient portion facing the front jaw, the resilient portion having a given cross-sectional thickness;

a front jaw release sheet positioned between the insertion zone and the front jaw when the front and rear jaws are in the open position; and

a heating element positioned between the front jaw release sheet and the front jaw, the heating element having a cross-sectional thickness no less than about 0.55 times the cross-sectional thickness of the resilient portion.

27. (Amended) A device for heat sealing at least two thermoplastic films together, the device comprising:

A4

front and rear opposing jaws moveable between an open position defining a zone for inserting the at least two films between the front and rear jaws and a closed position in which the front and rear jaws are proximate each other, the rear jaw including a resilient portion facing the front jaw, the resilient portion having a given cross-sectional thickness;

Sub B1

a front jaw release sheet positioned between the insertion zone and the front jaw when the front and rear jaws are in the open position;

a heating element positioned between the front jaw release sheet and the front jaw, the heating element having a cross-sectional thickness no less than about 0.55 times the cross-sectional thickness of the resilient portion; and

A4

at least one spacer attached to the front jaw release sheet, wherein the front jaw release sheet is disengaged from the heating element when the front and rear jaws are in the open position.

Cont'd Sub B7

35. (Amended) A device for heat sealing at least two thermoplastic films together, the device comprising:

front and rear opposing jaws moveable between an open position defining a zone for inserting the at least two films between the front and rear jaws and a closed position in which the front and rear jaws are proximate each other to compress the at least two thermoplastic films together, the rear jaw including a resilient portion facing the front jaw;

A5

a front jaw release sheet positioned between the insertion zone and the front jaw when the front and rear jaws are in the open position, the front jaw release sheet including an unreinforced release material;

a heating element positioned between the front jaw release sheet and the front jaw; and

at least one spacer attached to the front jaw release sheet, wherein the front jaw release sheet is disengaged from the heating element when the front and rear jaws are in the open position.

41. (Amended) The device of claim 33 wherein the heating element is at least partially embedded in the front jaw when the front and rear jaws are in the open position.

A6

42. (Amended) A device for simultaneously heat sealing and severing at least two thermoplastic films, the device comprising:

Sub B3

front and rear opposing jaws moveable between an open position defining a zone for inserting the at least two films between the front and rear jaws and a closed position in which